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To what extent is feminism still relevant today ?

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There has to be a shift in perspective where gender is seen as a continuum rather than two poles. We need to stop labelling one another by what we are not and start accepting one another for who we are.

ABSTRACT :

The world must finally come to terms with the fact that the name "feminist" now encompasses a far broader and deeper set of ideas than just the promotion of racial, sexual, and economic equality for all people. The essay begins with a brief history of feminism. The history of human evolution shows that there have always been a few key deviations between individuals. Over time, such distinctions developed into sexism. Over the centuries, the world has improved for both men and women thanks to the efforts of feminists everywhere. In this piece, I've explored the meaning and complexities of feminism, focusing especially on the feminist's place in the movement.

I have argued why feminism is necessary for the present day and shown why feminism is an essential component of human rights. The subsequent discussion has focused on feminism's evolution over the years. Elaborate groundwork has been created for the patriarchal response to epidemic persistence. The sphere of influence of feminism has expanded to unprecedented heights in everyday life. As the rights of women across the world have been fought for over the years, so too have those of feminism.

The article concludes with some thoughts on how far feminism may be taken. The Scope of feminism is multidimensional, which encompasses more than simply women who advocate for their rights to learn more, continue reading the article.

INTRODUCTION :

The prefix "femin-" originates from the Latin word for woman, "femina." The suffix "-ism," which harkens back to a belief, practice, or outlook, is pilfered from the Greek to describe

these philosophies. It wasn't until 1851 that the term was used for the first time in English, but even then it only signified "the ailment of being feminine."¹ The term "féminisme" was first used to describe those who strongly support the rights of women in 1837 by French philosopher and utopian socialist Charles Fourier. As a social movement, feminism contends for the rights of all people and organisations, regardless of their sexual orientation. Its founding principles include the idea that all individuals, irrespective of their gender, should be free to seek any opportunity and show any attribute. Feminism is sometimes misunderstood as a bias in favour of women, but in reality, it is a movement that promotes gender equality and welcomes members of the non-binary and transgender communities.²

Most people wonder why it's labelled "feminism" rather than "equalism", since the end objective is to attain parity. If we go into the past, we find that the meteoric rise of both the concept and the name "feminism" occurred simultaneously during the U.S. women's suffrage revolution of the late 1800s and early 1900s. The name seemed fitting given that this was an issue that only women throughout the world faced. Goals changed throughout time, but the nomenclature has remained the same. You may be wondering, "Why are we so alarmed about the term?" The truth is that the natural response is seen as negative when it comes to women, in contrast to when it comes to males, simply because of the societal conditioning that reinforces patriarchal norms. It's as if every lone figure in our culture's past foreshadowed the future by speaking up against women's subordination.

Feminist ideals have always been a part of our culture; for example, males automatically become Mr. upon reaching adulthood, whereas women have to wait until marriage to be referred to as Mrs. Do we ever stop and think about why it is that women still require men's assistance, despite the accolades they have earned?³ If we have a look at the overview of Feminism's Past, there were essentially three primary types of feminism that emerged: liberal, radical, and cultural. Structural reforms were a primary focus of liberal feminism, which sought

¹ Knowlaw\ <https://knowlaw.in/index.php/2020/07/13/is-feminism-still-relevant-in-the-21st-century/#:~:text=Even%20men%20and%20women%20should,society%20as%20a%20man%20gets.> \ Last Visited 03\02\2023

² Eku edu\ <https://wgs.eku.edu/what-feminism-0#:~:text=Feminism%3A%20What%20is%20it%3F,social%20theories%20and%20political%20activism.> \ Last Visiting 02\01\2023

³ Karen R. Blaisure and Katherine R. Allen\ Feminists and the Ideology and Practice of Marital Equality\ JSTOR\ Vol. 57\ pp. 5-19 \ (Feb., 1995),\ <https://doi.org/10.2307/353812>.

to eradicate discrimination against women, increase women's access to formerly male-only areas, and advance gender parity.

Historical development of feminism :

Early feminist movement :

The primary objective of the first wave of feminism was to secure legal protections for women's equality. Marriage, parenthood, ownership, and the vote all received special attention in the drafting of these statutes. Women's rights have historically and globally been subjugated to the authority of males, and as a result, many of these rights have been violated. This used to be a contentious topic, but now it's widely acknowledged even by the most naive among us. It's an irrefutable fact that women have always been treated unfairly.⁴

Second-wave feminism :

This dispute arose in the 1960s, during the start of the second wave of feminism. During and after its first period of prominence, the second wave of feminism shifted its attention to a broader range of concerns. The spotlight was squarely on sensitive topics including sexuality, reproductive rights, and domestic abuse. Many of these rights, which you might think of as a war against gender discrimination, are still being fought for in underdeveloped parts of India and the globe.

A large portion of the second generation of feminists shares the view that the current political and social order imposes strict norms on women's private life. It's apparent from films like "Mad Men" and others set before the 1960s that women had limited professional and political opportunities at the time. Man lived in a location thus named. Once again, this isn't exactly a hot-button issue. For a long time, women were restricted from entering male-dominated professions like business and politics. However, despite the efforts of second-wave feminists over the previous half-century, many women still lack access to basic freedoms.

⁴ Martha Rampton \ Four Waves of Feminism \ Pacific University Oregon\
<https://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/four-waves-feminism#:~:text=The%20first%20wave%20of%20feminism,with%20a%20focus%20on%20suffrage.> Last Visited 15\01\2023

The Feminist Movement's Third Wave :

The '90s saw the start of the third wave of feminism. Its primary motivation originated in dissatisfaction with the results of second-wave feminism. That's in part because women of colour were left out of the second-wave feminist movement. Assisting the two primary issues of third-wave feminism have been their divergent views on sexuality; whereas second-wave feminists are against sexually explicit movies of women and believe it's humiliating to women, third-wave feminists are fine with it so long as the lady is a consenting adult. Many people find that it gives them more agency. Feminists of the second and third waves work to make the movement more inclusive of women of colour and other marginalised groups. In addition, it makes an effort to welcome women from all walks of life.⁵

“ Rebecca Walker” used the phrase "third wave" to highlight the contributions of non-white women and the LGBTQ community.⁶ Third-wave feminists, in contrast, to second-wave feminists, are less concerned with social reform and more concerned with exploring their own unique identities via explorations of topics like queer theory and gender roles.

This begs the question, "what exactly is the issue?" All women, including women of colour, the LGBTQ community, and white women, have the right to live in a society that treats them fairly and doesn't discriminate against them based on who they are or who they love. Logic prevails here; it seems reasonable that women would want recognition of their humanity regardless of the labels they choose to apply to themselves. There should be no exceptions to the principle that women have the right to bodily autonomy and legal protection against assault.

However, in the current era, the third wave of feminism, feminists have ventured into the unexplored ground. One third-wave feminist, for instance, said in her book that "all women are bitches"; this is the difficulty with modern-day feminism; they consider such explicit terminology to be savvy. These people call for the reclaiming of such terms. Her book has passages like, "I plan to scream, yell, race the engine, phone when I feel like it, have tantrums at Bloomingdale's if I feel like it, and divulge sensitive facts about my life to strangers." Women need to realise that feminism is not about satisfying their own wants for independence from cultural standards in their different societies—that is, the bitch mentality.

⁵ Britannica \ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism/The-third-wave-of-feminism> Last Visited 08\01\2023
⁶ ibid

Feminism is a unique direction so long as feminists work to ensure that women have the same legal protections as men and actively demand that these laws be enforced. Not only is this reasonable, but it's also not contentious. Equal rights and protections should be afforded to women of colour just as they are to white women, men of colour, and white men. LGBTQ+ folks and trans folks alike. ⁷

Despite the advances made in recent decades, we still have a long way to go until all people of both sexes are afforded the same rights and protections. In contrast, contemporary third-wave feminist alienates everyone except herself.

How society and men should perceive the idea of feminism :

A recent study found that the main issue with modern feminists is that they all seem like they're victims of patriarchy because of the way they talk. But the truth is we are not victims; we are only using the rights that the cosmos implicitly granted to every living human being.

Many men in our culture have been affected by sexism, and it has left an indelible mark on their thinking. A man's values dictate that he must be vigilant against the possible incubation of patriarchal culture and misogynistic behaviour inside his own head. Until the ideology of misogyny loses its essential core, this practice must be accepted and integrated into everyday behaviours. It's claimed that every guy has some kind of connection to a woman, whether it be via his mother, his wife, or his own offspring. When reflecting on their own relationships, males typically perceive things from a different angle.

As a matter of policy, we have never set out to undermine or compete with males. Without males, femininity is incomplete; men must abandon the pride of their masculinity and take the lead, not in order to set women free, but in tandem with them. The feminist alliance, which includes both male and female activists, will be more effective with men's participation in the fight against discrimination against women. Forming a coalition of men who are sensitive to gender issues is crucial if they are to remain consistent in their efforts to remove all types of discrimination against women.

⁷ Council of Europe\ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/feminism-and-women-s-rights-movements>
Last Visited 10\01\2023

There will be no tolerance for unchecked propaganda that fails to provide males with the respect they deserve. While it's important to treat each individual with respect and avoid stereotyping based on gender, the battle for women's equality should continue unabated.

The need and relevance of feminism today :

There are still numerous issues with the way women are treated in today's society if one were to take it into consideration. As a result of the persistent expectation that males should shoulder a disproportionate share of domestic and childcare responsibilities, intelligent women continue to be underrepresented in senior leadership roles. With the help of the internet and social media, women can now reach a wider audience, giving them a greater voice in democracies than in the past. Women who speak out for what they believe in will always be admired for their courage. When considering the circumstances of certain women, the need for feminism today is called into doubt.

Feminism will really be over when women everywhere are no longer subject to the oppression of any kind. She is a very remarkable and inspiring person. For example, "Malala Yousafzai" has stated, "I lift up my voice — not to yell, but so that those without a voice may be heard... we cannot succeed while half of us are kept back." This quote emphasises the reality that feminism cannot be realised if even one of us is left behind. Millions of young women may now soar with confidence because of her.

Though intersectionality activism acknowledges the interconnected nature of many social movements, trans women continue to be unfairly excluded from feminism. For many trans women, feminism is off-limits because they are socialised as male from birth; these women face discrimination, to begin with, and we further marginalise them by not supporting our trans sisters. Although feminism began as a movement for women in general, the concept has been widely popularised in recent decades. We are now charged with the mission of revolutionising the definition of feminism. In certain places of the globe, women's rights have advanced significantly during the last century.

More women and girls than ever before may now exercise fundamental democratic rights including the right to vote, freedom from violence, and maternity health protections. Over 2.7

billion women are legally prevented from having the same work opportunities as males, and one in three women and girls experience sexual abuse throughout their lifetime. Only 22.8% of elected positions in parliaments across the globe are held by women.⁸ The vast majority of maternal mortality is concentrated in low-income regions. Two-thirds of the world's adult population that cannot read or write are women. The global prevalence of domestic abuse is 3.6 billion women. There is still a long way to go until all women and girls have equal rights, which is why feminism is still necessary. The first step towards overcoming the world's many problems is inside each of our own thoughts, beliefs, values, and deeds; thus, it is essential that we remain vigilant in this regard. The inequality in our society must be addressed. Imagining a society in which all girls get a quality education and have their rights protected inviolately brings joy to the heart. These radical improvements would make the world a better place by allowing people to live without fear of the most horrific forms of violence. Feminism, in its truest meaning, celebrates the rights of all people.

Having three daughters is a financial and emotional burden in Indian society. This is especially true when it comes to meeting their reproductive and bodily needs. Providing for the dowry costs of their three daughters is one such difficulty for the Indian parents. They will be unable to get an education and/or will be forced into marriage at a young age. As a result, it's important to formulate a body of beliefs with the goal of establishing and protecting women's civil, legal, and political liberties. Knowledge of feminism will empower women to work tirelessly to reclaim the respect that has been taken from them in India and around the world. There is an awareness of fighting for equal rights within the family, but they were previously unfamiliar with the term "feminism."

Everyone, especially women, has been profoundly impacted by feminism. According to historical documents, this was not the driving force for women winning the vote. It was a major accomplishment that was accomplished entirely by women.

Moreover, a glance at modern feminism reveals that the movement is centred on campaigns with far-reaching effects. Abortion of unintended pregnancies and reproductive rights advocacy campaigns are two examples of how women are allowed to exercise choice. In addition, feminism is committed to rejecting patriarchy and traditional gender norms. It's an

⁸ United Nation\ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> Last Visited 10\01\2023

environment where men can be themselves without fear of ridicule. It's okay for men to show emotion, and we shouldn't stigmatise it.

Equally important, it helps the LGBTQ community in many ways by fighting for their rights. Practising intersectional feminism is a great way to better understand the struggles of many groups within society. There will always be a need to eradicate the pervasive patriarchal and feudal attitudes that permeate our culture.

CONCLUSION :

Many women's dreams, voices, and strengths will be unleashed by this kind of movement for the first time. Women seem to share the egocentric worldview but not the identity. It's possible that they'll cooperate less on women's rights. Because of the media's often-negative portrayal of feminism and feminists, many women now view equality as a pipe dream. They may identify as feminists, but they don't think so. People's levels of feminist self-identification increase when they are exposed to both self-identified feminists and discourses about various strands of feminism.

The people fighting for equality need to know whether the refusal of the feminist label is based on fear of stigma related to identity, neoliberal convictions, or some other elucidation. Tolerance ends here; from now on, no one will be able to question or even consider doubting a woman's talents or authenticity. We are not delicate feathers to be admired; rather, our bodies and brains are capable of far more than being confined to the comforts of home. Without us, there is no tomorrow; we are the voice of the present and the key to the future. "In times of self-doubt, I have often asked myself, "If not me, who?" "If not now, then when?"⁹

⁹ Emma Watson

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